

### Remarks/Arguments

Claims 1, 7, 17, 37, 41 and 50 have been amended.

The Examiner has rejected applicants claims 1, 3, 6-18, 20 and 22-36 under 35 USC § 102(b) as anticipated by the Namikawa, et al. (US 6,070,911) patent. The Examiner has further rejected applicants' claims 19, 21, 37, 40-51, 53, 55-56, 58-60, 52, 54, 57 under 35 USC § 103(a) based on the latter patent taken with one or more of the Schlicht (US 5,967,566) patent, the Pabla, et al. (US 2004/0137259) patent application publication, the Energy Partners reference and the Guthrie, et al. (US 4,786,086) patent. With respect to applicants' claims, as amended, these rejections are respectfully traversed.

Applicants' independent claims 1 and 37 have been amended to better define applicants' invention. More particularly, amended claim 1 now recites a "connection assembly for connecting first and second components so as to promote electrical isolation therebetween comprising first and second members adapted to be connected to said first and second components and a dielectric member situated between said first and second members, wherein each of said first and second members includes a through opening and said dielectric member is a disk-shaped member having opposing first and second flat surfaces which extend to a through opening in said disk-shaped member, said through openings of said first and second members and said dielectric member being such as to allow passage through the through opening of one of the first and second members, through the through opening of the dielectric member, and then through the through opening of the other of the first and second members, and wherein the through opening of said dielectric member is smaller than the through openings of said first and second members."

Independent claim 37 has been similarly amended.

Such a construction is not taught or suggested by the cited art of record. In particular, the Namikawa, et al. patent teaches in FIG. 1, a “typical pipe joint. . . which includes weld neck flanges 1a, 1b, insulating sleeve 2, insulating washer 3, steel washer 4, insulating gasket ring for the raised face 5, steel bolt 6, nut 7.” As is evident from FIG. 1, the insulating sleeve 2 is an elongated cylindrical tube-shaped member which extends within tubular shaped facing extensions at the ends of the weld necks 1a, 1b. Also, the insulating gasket ring for the raised face 5 has opposing flat surfaces which extend to a central opening which is of the same dimension as the openings of the weld necks 1a, 1b.

The pipe joint in FIG. 1 of the Namikawa, et al. patent thus does not teach or suggest applicants’ invention of claim 1 wherein “a dielectric member [is] situated between said first and second members, wherein each of said first and second members includes a through opening and said dielectric member is a disk-shaped member having opposing flat surfaces which extend to a through opening in said disk-shaped member . . . and wherein the through opening of said dielectric member is smaller than the through openings of said first and second members.”

Additionally, the Namikawa, et al. patent teaches in FIGS. 3A and 3B “the clamp-type pipe joint GRAYLOC before and after fastening its clamp, which includes hubs 21a, 21b, a seal ring 22, a seal ring rib 22R, a seal ring contact surface 22L a clamp 23 and a clamp contact surface S. The seal ring 22 in FIGS. 3A and 3B of Namikawa, et al. , thus has opposing surfaces which extend parallel to each other (rib 22R) and then flare outwardly from each other, and then again parallel to each other (ring contact surfaces 22L) to the opening in the ring.

This clamp-type pipe joint thus also fails to teach or suggest “a dielectric member situated between said first and second members, wherein each of said first and second members includes a through opening and said dielectric member is a disk-shaped member having opposing first and second flat surfaces which extend to a through opening in said disk-shaped member . . . and wherein the through opening of said dielectric member is smaller than the through openings of said first and second members.” As above-stated, the opposing surfaces in the sealing ring in the GRAYLOCK pipe-joint are not flat, but extend parallel, then flare outwardly, and then parallel, so that there are no opposing first and second flat surfaces which extend to a through opening, as required by applicants’ amended claims 1 and 37.

Applicants’ amended claims 1 and 37, and their respective dependent claims, all of which recite the above features, thus patentably distinguish over the Namikawa, et al. patent. The other cited references, i.e., the Schlicht patent, the Pabla, et al. patent application publication, the Energy Partners reference and the Guthrie, et al. patent fail to add anything to the Namikawa, et al. patent to change this conclusion. Thus, amended claims 1 and 37, and their respective dependent claims, also patentably distinguish over the combination of these references.

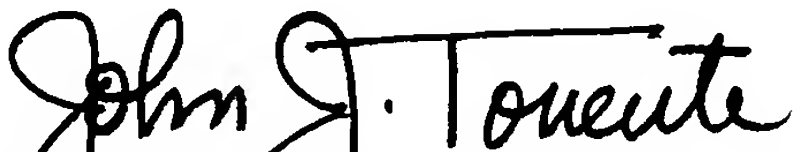
Additionally, the features recited in at least applicants’ dependent claims 6, 8-16, 20-21, 28, 30, 32, 37, 40, 42-43, 47, 49, and 53-55 are not believed to be taught or suggested by the cited references. In particular, and the Examiner has pointed to nothing specifically in the cited references which teach or suggest these features. Accordingly, these features are believed to further patentably distinguish such dependent claims over the cited references.

In view of the above, it is submitted that applicants' claims, as amended, patentably distinguish over the cited art of record. Accordingly, reconsideration of the claims is respectfully requested.

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